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THE CHURL AND THE BIRD
TRANSLATED BY JOHN LYDGATE

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The Churl and the Bird
translated from the French
by
John Lydgate

Printed by William Caxton
about 1478

Cambridge
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1906

Once more the volume of black-letter tracts (AB. 8. 48) from Bishop Moore's library, presented to the University in 1715 by King George the First, supplies the unique original here reproduced.

Chaucer has already been represented in this series by the 'Story of Anelida' and Lydgate by the 'Temple of Glass' from the same volume. In 'The Churl and the Bird' Lydgate appears as a translator from the French.

FRANCIS JENKINSON

1906 June 29.

I certify that I have printed 250 copies only of this facsimile, that the impressions have been rubbed off the plates and the negatives destroyed.

P. DUJARDIN

p Roblemes of olde likenes and figures
Whiche prouyde ben fructuos of ſentence
And auctoritees grounded on ſcriptures
By reſemblance of notable apparence
With moralites concludyng on prudence
Lyke as the bible reherceth by writyng
How trees chees hem ſomtyme a kynge

Firſt in their choyſe they named tholyue
To regne among them Judicū doth expreſſe
But he hym ſelf gan excuſen blyue
He myght not forſaken his fatteneſſe
Ne the fyge tree his amerouſe ſweteneſſe
Ne the vigne his holſome tarage
Whiche yeueth comfort to mā maner age

And ſemblably petes laureate
By derke parables ful conuenyent
Feyne that birdes and beeſtes of eſtate
As ryall egles and lyons by aſſent
Sente oute writtes to holde a parlament
And made decrees briefly for to ſeye
Somē to haue lordſhip & ſomē to obeye

Eglis in thayre highest to make the flight
Power of lyons on the grownd is sene
Cedre among trees highest is of sight
And the laurer of nature is aye grene
Of flouris alle flora ay goddesse and quene
Thus of alle thinges ther ley diuersitees
Some of estate and sort of lowe degrees

Poetes wryte wonderfull lykenes
And vnder couerte kepe hem self cloos
They take beestes and fowles to witnes
Of whos faynyng fables first arose
And here I caste to my purpos
Oute of frenche a tale to translate
Whiche in a pamflete I redy & fulle late

This tale whiche I make of mencion
In grose reherse playnly to declare
Thre prouerbes payd for a raunson
Of a birde whiche was take in a snare
Wonder desirouse to scape fro her care
Of myn auctours folowyng the processe
So as it be fett in order I shal expresse

Whilom ther was in a ſmall vilage
As myn auctour maketh reherſayll
A chorle whiche had luſt & grete corage
With in hym ſelf by diligent trauayll
To make a gardyn of riche entayll
Of lenghte and brede liche ſquare & longe
Heggid & dichid to make hit ſure & ſtronge

Alle the aleyes were made playn with ſonde
The benches couerde with newe turues grene
Swete herbes with conduytes at the honde
That welkith vp agayn the ſomme ſhene
Like ſiluer ſtremes as ony criſtall clene
The burbill walles in their vp boyllyng
Roundy as bretll their bemes out ſhedyng

Myddy in the gardyn ſtode a freſſhe laurere
Therin a birde ſingyng day and nyght
With ſhynyng fethers brighter than gold wyre
Whiche with her ſonge made heuy hertes light
That to beholde hit was an heuenly ſight
How toward euen and in the dalbenynge
She dyde her peyne moſt amerouſly to ſynge

Eſperus enforſidy ſtrongly her corage
Towardy euen Whan phebus gan to Weſte
Amonge the braunches to her auantage
To ſynge her complyne andy thay go to reſte
Andy at ryſyngy of quene alceſte
To ſynge agayn as hit Was her delbe
Erly oy morowbe the day ſterre to ſalelbe

Hit Was a very heuenly melodye
Euyn andy morn to here the birdes ſonge
Andy the ſWete fugridy armonye
Of Dncouthe Warblis & telDnes dzalDe a longe
That alle the gardyn of the noyſe wonge
Tyl oy a morowbe Whan titan ſhone clere
This birde Was trapped & caught With a pantere

The chorle Was glady Whan he this birde hady take
Mery of chere of loke andy of Diſage
Andy in al haſte he purpoſedy to make
Withyn his hous a praty litylk cage
Andy With her ſonge to reioyſe his corage
Tylk at the laſte the ſely birde abreyde
Andy ſoberly thus to the chorle ſhe ſeyde

I am now take and stande vnder danger
Holde streight that I may not flee
Adew my songe and alle my notes cleer
Now that I haue loste my liberte
Now I am thralle where sometyme I was free
And truste welle whyle I am in distresse
I can not synge nor make no gladnesse

And though my cage forged were of golde
And the pynacles of bereell and cristalle
I remembre a prouerbe said of olde
Who loseth his fredom forsothe he loseth alle
For I had leuer vpon a braunche smalle
Merily to synge among the woodes grene
Than in a cage of siluer bright and shene

Songe in prison hath none acordance
Trowest thou I wyll synge in prison
Songe procedeth of Joye and of plesance
And prison causeth deth and destruction
Ryngyng of feters is no mery soune
Or how shold he be glad or Joconde
Agayn his wille that lieth in cheynes bonde

What auayleth hit a lyon to be a kynge
Of beſtes alle ſhette in a toure of ſtone
Or ay egle vnder ſtreyte keppynge
Calledy alſo kynge of fowles euerichone
Fy on lordſhip whan liberte is gone
Anſwere herto late hit not aſterte
Who ſyngeth merily that ſyngeth not at herte

And yf thou wilt reioyſe of my ſyngynge
Late me goo flee fer from alle daunger
And euery day in the morenynge
I ſhal repayre vnto thy ladyer
And freſſhly ſynge with luſty notes cleer
Vnder thy chambre or a fore thyn halle
Euery ſeaſon whan thou liſte me calle

To be ſhette vp and pynnedy vnder drede
No thyng acordeth vnto my nature
Though I were fedy with mylke & waſteſſ brede
And with cudes brought to my paſture
Yet hady I leuer to do my beſy cure
Erly on morowe to ſcrape in the dale
To fynde my dyner amongy the wormes ſmale

The labower is gladder at the plough
Erly on morow to fede hym on bacon
Than ſom man is/that hath goody ynough
And alle deyntees plente and foyſon
And hath no fredom With his poſſeſſion
To goo at large but as a bere at a ſtake
To paſſe his boundes but yf he leue take

Take this anſwer for a fulle concluſion
To ſynge in priſon thou ſhalt not me cõſtrayne
Tyl I haue fredom in Woodes vp and doun
To fle at large on bowghes wilde and playn
And of reſon thou ſholdeſt not diſdayne
Of my deſire but laughe and haue game
But Who is a chorle Wolde eche mã Were ỹ ſame

Welle quod the chorle/ſithe hit Wyl not be
That I deſire/as by thy talkynge
Magre thy Wylle thou ſhalt chefe of thre
With in a cage merily to ſynge
Or to the kechyne I ſhal thy body bringe
Pulle thy fethers that be bright and clere
And after roſte or bake the to my ſoupere

Than ſaidȝ the birde to reſon ſaye J not naye
Touchinge my ſonge a ful anſwer thou haſt
Andȝ whan my fetherꝭ pluckydȝ ben awaye
Andȝ my body roſtedȝ or bakeȝ in paaſt
Thou ſhalt of me haue a ſmalle repaaſt
But andȝ thou wilt werke by my counceyle
Thou mayſt by me haue a grete auayle

Yf thou wilt to my reaſon aſſente
Andȝ ſuffre me goo frely from pryſon
With oute raunſon or ony other rente
J ſhal the ryue a notable gwerdone
Thre grete wyſedoms accordynge to reſon
More of value/take hede what J profre
Than alle the golde that ſhette is in thy cofre

Truſte me well J ſhal the not diſceyue
Well ſaidȝ the chorle telle anon late ſee
Nay ſaydȝ the birde thou muſte afore conceyue
Who ſhal teche/of reaſon muſte go free
Hit ſitteth a maiſter to haue his libertee
Andȝ at large to teche his leſſon
Haue me not ſuſpect/J mene no treſon

Well ſayd the chorle I holde me contente
I truſte thy promyſe ꝑ thou haſt made to me
The birde flewe forth the chorle was of aſſente
And toke her flight vp to the lawrer tree
Than thought ſhe thus now ſtondy I free
With ſnares & panters I purpoſe not my lyue
Ne with no lyme twigges ony more to ſtryue

He is a fool that ſcapidy is fro daunger
Hath broke his fethers & fledy out of priſon
Agayn to reſorte/ brente childe dredeth fyre
Eche may beware by wyſedom andy reaſon
Sugre ſtrawedy that hideth falſe poyſon
Ther is no venym ſo perylous of ſharpnes
As whan hit hath of tryacle the likenes

Who dredeth no paryll in paryll he ſhal falle
Smothe waters kreen ofte tyme depe
The quayle pype can moſt falſely calle
Tyl the quayle vnder the nette doth crepe
A bleareyedy fowler truſte not though he wepe
Eſchewe his thombe of wepyng take none hede
That ſmale birdes can nype by the hede

And now that I ſuche daunger am eſcaped
I wyll beware and a fore prouyde
That of no fobler I wyll nomore be Japed
Fro their lyme twigges I wyll fle fer a ſyde
Where paryll is paryll is to abyde
Come nere thou chorle and herke to my ſpeche
Of thre wyſedōms that I ſhal the teche

Yeue not of wyſedōm to haſty credence
To euery tale ne to euery tidynge
But conceyue of reſon and of prudence
Amonge many tales is many a leſyng
Haſty credence hath cauſed grete hyndryng
Reporte of tales and tidynges told of newe
Maketh many a man to beholde vntrewe

For one part take this for my raunſon
Lerne the ſeconde grounded on ſcripture
Deſire not thou by no condicion
Thyng whiche is Impoſſible to recure
Wordly deſires ſtonde all in auenture
And who deſireth to clymbe high a lofte
Be ſodeyn turne falleth ofte vnſofte

The thirde is this beware bothe eue & morow
Forgete hit not but lerne this of me
For treſour loſt make neuer to grete ſorowe
Whiche in no wyſe may recouerd be
For who ſorowyth for loſſe in that degre
Rekene firſt his loſſe and aftir his peyne
Of one ſorowe he maketh ſorowes tweyne

After this leſſon the birde begay a ſonge
Of her eſcape gretly reioyſſinge
And remembrid her alſo of the wronge
Soon by the chorle firſt at her takynge
Of her affraye and of her enpryſonynge
Glad that ſhe was at large & out of drede
Sayde to hym houynge aboue his hede

Thou were ſayd ſhe a veray naturel fool
To ſuffre me departe of thy lewdenes
Thou oughteſt of right compleyne & make dole
And in thyn herte to haue grete heuynes
That thou haſt loſt ſo paſſing grete riches
Whiche might ſuffyſe by valew in rekenyng
To paye the raunſon of a mighty kyng

Ther is a ſtone/ Whiche callid is a Jagounce
Of olde engendrid Withyn myn entrayllle
Whiche of fyn gold peyſeth an vnce
Cytryn of colour lyke garnettis of entayllle
Whiche maketh mey victorious in batayllle
And Who ſo euer bere on hym this ſtone
Is full aſſuryd agayn his mortal foon

Who hath this ſtone in his poſſeſſion
Shal ſuffre no pouerte ne none indigence
But of alle treſour haue plente and foyſon
And euery man ſhal do hym reuerence
And enemye ſhal do hym none offence
But fro thyn handes now that I am goon
Playne yf thou wilt/ for thy part is noon

Hit cauſeth loue hit maketh mey gracious
And fauorable in euery mannes ſight
Hit maketh accorde betwene folk enuyous
Cõforteth ſowlfull/ maketh heuy hertes light
Lyke topaſion of colour ſomyſſh bright
I am a fool to telle alle attones
Or teche a chorle the pris of precious ſtones

Men ſholde not put a preciouſe margarite
As rubies ſaphires andy other ſtones ynde
Emeraldes andy other perles Whyte
A fore rude ſwyne that loue draf of kynde
For a ſolle deliteth as J fynde
More in draff her piggys for to glade
Than in all the perry ꝑ cometh out of garnade

Eche thinge draweth to his ſemblable
Fyſſhes in the ſeë reeſtes on the ſtronde
The ayer for foules by nature is couenable
Andy to the ploughman for to tylle the londe
Andy to a chorle a dongforke in his honde
J loſe my tyme ony more to tarye
For to telle a chorle of the lapidarye

That thou hadeſt thou geteſt nomore agayn
Thy lyme twigges andy panters J deffye
To late me goon thou were foul ouer ſeyn
To loſe thy riches only of folye
J am nolle free to ſyngen andy to flye
Wher that me liſte andy he is a fool at all
That is at large & maketh hym ſelf thrall

To heere of Wisedom thyn eeres ley half deef
Lyke an asse that listneth on an harpe
Thou maist goo pipen in an yuy leef
Better is to me to synge on thornes sharpe
Than in a cage With a chorle to carpe
For hit Was said of folkes yeres agoon
A chorles chorle is ofte Woo begoon

The chorle felte his herte parte on tweyne
For Verray sorowe and a sonder ryue
Alas said he I may Wel Wepe and pleyne
As a Wrecche neuer lyke to thryue
But for tendure in pouerte all my lyue
For of folye and of Wilfulnes
I haue now lost alle hoolly my riches

I Was a lord I crye out on fortune
I had grete tresour late in my keppynge
Whiche myght haue made me long contune
With that stone, to haue liued lyke a kyng
Yf I had sette hit in a ryng
Sory hit vpon me, I had had goody ynowhe
I sholde than nomore haue goon to the plough

Whan the birde ſalbe the chorle thus morne
And how that he Was heuy of his chere
She toke her flight & gan agayn retorne
Towardy hym and ſayde as ye ſhal here
O dulle chorle Wyſedoms for to lere
That J the taughte alle is left behynde
Racyd awaye & clene out of thy mynde

Taught J not the this Wyſedom in ſentence
To euery tale brought to the of nelbe
Not to haſtely yeue ther to credence
In to tyme thou knowe that hit were trelbe
Alle is not golde that ſhelbeth golditſſh helbe
Nor ſtones alle be nature as J fynde
Be not ſaphirs that ſhelbe colour ynde

In this [illegible]rine J loſte my labour
To teche the ſuche prouerbis of ſubſtaunce
Now maiſt thou ſee thy blyndely errour
For alle my body poyſed in balance
Weyeth not au vnce rude is thy remembraunce
J to haue more poyſe cloſid in myn entraylle
Than alle my body ſet for the counteruaylle

Alle my body weyeth not an vnce
Holde myghty thay I haue in me a ſtone
That peyſeth more thay a Jagoumce
Thy brayn is dulle thy witte is alle moſt goon
Of thre wyſedoms thou haſt forgoten oon
Thou ſhuldeſt not after my ſentence
To euery tale to haſtely yeue credence

I bade alſo beware both euen and morow
For thinge loſt of ſodeyn auenture
Thou ſholdeſt not make to moche ſorowe
Whan thou ſeeſt/thou maiſt hit not recure
And here thou fayleſt whyche doſt thy cure
In thy ſnare to cacche me agayn
Thou art a fool/thy labour is in vayn

In the thirde thou doſt raue
I bade thou ſholdeſt in no maner wyſe
Coueyte thinge that thou maiſt not haue
In whiche thou haſte forgoon myn enpryſe
Thay may I ſaye plenly to deuyſe
Thou haſt of madnes forgoten alle thre
Notable wiſedoms that I taught the

The vynetener treteth of holſom wynes
Of gentyl fruyte koſteth the gardener
The fyſſher caſteth oute hookes and lynes
To cache fyſſhe in euery freſſhe ryuer
Of tilthe of londe treteth the houere
The gentilman talketh of genterye
The chorle deliteth to ſpeke rybaldrye

Alle one to the a falkone and a kyte
As goody ay olde as a popyngage
A dame of the donghyll as deynte as a ſnyte
Who ſerueth a chorle hath many a careful daye
A due ſir chorle farewell I fle my waye
I caſte me neuer hens forth me kyuyng
To fore a chorle ony more to ſynge

Ye folke that ſhal this fable ſee or rede
Melde forged tales I counceyle you to flee
For loſſe of goody take neuer grete hede
Be not ſorowful for none aduerſite
Coueyte not thinge that may not recouerydy be
And remembre wherever ye ryde or goon
A chorles chorle is alway woo be goon

Unto purpos this prouerbe is full ryff
Rede and reportedy by olde remembrance
A childes birde and a knaues wyff
Haue ofte sith grete sorowe and meschance
And who hath fredom hath alle suffisance
Better is fredom with liteke in gladnes
Than to be thraff with alle worldly riches

Goo liteke quayer and recomande me
Unto my maister with humble affection
Beseke hym lowly of mercy and pyte
Of thy rude makyng to haue compassion
And as touchyng thy translacion
Out of frenssh how that hit englisshidy be
Alle thyng is saidy under correction
With supportacion of his benygnyte

Explicit the chorle and the birde.

by John Lydgate